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Failure to oust Speaker 'MAGA Mike' Johnson shows strength and weakness of his alliance with Trump

By LISA MASCARO

AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — It was Donald Trump who bestowed the "MAGA Mike Johnson" nickname on the House speaker the day he won the gavel. It is the Republican speaker himself who is proving whether it sticks. Johnson survived an ouster vote this week by one of Trump's biggest supporters in Congress, far-right Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, his job secured only after House Democrats turned out in force to put an end to the GOP chaos, for now.

But the oversized role Trump played in propping up Johnson cannot be understated — or relied upon to save the speaker again.

In fact, the indicted former president who has been known to flip his friends into foes warned that while Republicans shouldn't be voting to remove Johnson, "At some point, we may very well be, but this is not the time."



Speaker of the House Mike Johnson, R-La., speaks as Republican presidential candidate former President Donald Trump listens during a news conference, Friday, April 12, 2024, at Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach, Fla.

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Failure to oust Speaker 'MAGA Mike' Johnson shows strength and weakness of his alliance with Trump

Continued from Front

The outcome puts on display the fragility of the unexpected but strategically beneficial alliance that Trump and Johnson have formed ahead of the November election when both hope to be returned to power — the Republican president in the White House and the loyal foot soldier in Congress.

"Seems like they're on the same page, and I think that's great," said lawyer Cleta Mitchell, who was a key figure in Trump's efforts to challenge the 2020 election.

Johnson has worked diligently to align himself with the former president, the conservative Christian setting aside his once critical views of the presidential contender to present himself as a chief implementer of the Trump Republican Party's Make America Great Again agenda on Capitol Hill.

Barely six months on the job, since Johnson replaced the ousted then-Speaker Kevin McCarthy, the new leader has dashed multiple times to Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort, securing crucial support, including at a glitzy Republican National Committee gala this past weekend.

When Trump invited Johnson to the stage to say a few words, the speaker praised the former president as the "strongman" the country needs in the White House. Trump and Johnson are cordial, according to a person with knowledge of their relationship, and granted anonymity to discuss it.

"He's doing a great job," Trump said alongside Johnson after another visit last month, ahead of the House vote to approve a national security package with Ukraine funding that Greene warned would lead to a vote on Johnson's ouster. In return for his seal of approval, Trump is increasingly able to rely on the speaker's high-profile standing to legitimize his relentless attacks on the U.S. election process, the judicial system and the multiple criminal cases against him, including the federal indictment for his efforts to overturn the 2020 election



Speaker of the House Mike Johnson, R-La., speaks as Republican presidential candidate former President Donald Trump listens during a news conference, Friday, April 12, 2024, at Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach, Fla.

Associated Press

ahead of the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol attack.

"All these cases need to be dropped," says Johnson, a constitutional lawyer, who as the House speaker is second in the line of presidential succession. "President Trump has done nothing wrong. ... It has to stop."

Trump is already pre-emptively contesting the 2024 election as potentially rigged before the first ballots are cast, and Johnson, who helped lead legal challenges to Joe Biden's 2020 election victory, is in a powerful position to again question the legitimacy of the outcome.

Asked this week if he believed the 2020 election was legitimate and if he would stand by the new state-certified results this fall, Johnson shook his head in frustration, and demurred. "What we're talking about today is the 2024 election, nobody can go back and relitigate what happened in 2020," he said. The joint venture between Trump and Johnson was in clear focus Wednesday ahead of the House action when the speaker, flanked on

the Capitol steps by a who's who of the former president's advisers, announced new legislation that would require proof of citizenship before Americans are eligible to vote. Johnson had promised Trump a voting-citizenship bill during one of the Mar-a-Lago visits, and the unveiling of it alongside Mitchell, Stephen Miller, the architect of Trump's hardline immigration policies, and others showed just how embedded the former president's Make America Great Again movement has become in the House speaker's agenda.

Election experts said there is scant evidence that non-citizens vote in U.S. elections, and past reviews including one pursued by the Trump administration have not produced significant cases of wrongdoing.

Nevertheless, Johnson and the others argued without proof that immigrants are being brought into the U.S. to illegally vote. The legislation can be seen as groundwork for the challenges Trump may pose in the aftermath of the November election.

"If this bill does not become law, then Joe Biden and Democrats will have engineered one of the greatest interferences in any democratic nation in the history of the world," Miller said outside the Capitol.

Still, the legislative push did not placate Greene, who hours later tried and failed to remove the speaker from office.

Colleagues booed in protest. An overwhelming majority, 359-43, kept Johnson in his job, for now.

"I'm proud of what I did today," Greene said afterward on the Capitol steps.

It's the second time in a matter of months that Republicans have worked to oust their own speaker, an unheard of level of party upheaval with a move rarely seen in U.S. history.

Without Democratic help, Johnson would have certainly faced a more dismal outcome. All told, 196 and 163 Democrats voted to table Greene's motion. But 11 Republicans voted to proceed with the effort, more than it took to remove McCarthy

last fall, a first in U.S. history. Democrats have also made clear their help was for this moment alone, and not a promise of an enduring partnership for Johnson's survival. "Our decision to stop Marjorie Taylor Greene from plunging the country into further chaos is rooted in our commitment to solve problems," said Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, D-N.Y., after the vote.

"The only thing we ask of our House Republican colleagues is for traditional Republicans to further isolate the extreme MAGA Republican wing of the GOP," said Jeffries, who is in line to become speaker if Democrats win control of the House in the fall. "We need more common sense and less chaos."

Asked about a future motion to vacate the speaker, Jeffries said, "Haven't given it a thought."

By relying on Democratic backing, Johnson risks inciting more criticism that he is insufficiently loyal to the party. And the threat still lingers — any single lawmaker can call up the motion to vacate the speaker. □

Guns are being stolen from cars at triple the rate they were 10 years ago, a report finds

By **LINDSAY WHITEHURST** and
ALANNA DURKIN RICHER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The rate of guns stolen from cars in the U.S. has tripled over the last decade, making them the largest source of stolen guns in the country, an analysis of FBI data by the gun safety group Everytown found.

The rate of stolen guns from cars climbed nearly every year and spiked during the coronavirus pandemic along with a major surge in weapons purchases in the U.S., according to the report, which analyzes FBI data from 337 cities in 44 states and was provided to The Associated Press.

The stolen weapons have, in some cases, turned up at crime scenes. In July 2021, a gun taken from an unlocked car in Riverside, Florida, was used to kill a 27-year-old Coast Guard member as she tried to stop a car burglary in her neighborhood.

The alarming trend underscores the need for Americans to safely secure their firearms to prevent them from getting into the hands of dangerous people, said Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives Director Steve Dettelbach, whose agency has separately found links between



This undated photo provided by the Van Buren County Sheriff's Office in Paw Paw, Mich., shows stolen guns, ammunition and knives that were recovered Sept. 12, 2015, in Antwerp Township, Mich.

stolen guns and violent crimes.

"People don't go to a mall and steal a firearm from a locked car to go hunting. Those guns are going straight to the street," said Dettelbach, whose agency was not involved in the report. "They're going to violent people who can't pass a background check. They're going to gangs. They're going to drug dealers, and they're going to hurt and kill the people who live in the next town, the next county or the next state."

Nearly 112,000 guns were reported stolen in 2022, and just over half of those

were from cars — most often when they were parked in driveways or outside people's homes, the Everytown report found. That's up from about one-quarter of all thefts in 2013, when homes were the leading spot for firearm thefts, the report says.

Stolen guns have also been linked to tragic accidents, such as when a 14-year-old boy in St. Petersburg, Florida, killed his 11-year-old brother after finding in an alley a gun that had been stolen from an unlocked car a few days before.

At least one firearm was stolen from a car every nine minutes on average in 2022,

the most recent year for which data was available. That's almost certainly an undercount, though, since there's no federal law requiring people to report stolen guns and only one-third of states require a report. "Every gun stolen from a car increases the chances it'll be used in a violent crime," said Sarah Burd-Sharp, senior director of research at Everytown, which advocates for gun control policies. It's unclear what's driving the trend. The report found higher theft rates in states with looser gun laws, which also tend to have higher rates of gun ownership.

The report analyzed crime data from the FBI's National Incident-Based Reporting System, which includes details about what was stolen and where it came from. Guns stolen from cars bucked car theft trends overall — the rate of other things stolen from cars has dropped 11% over the last 10 years, even as the rate of gun thefts from cars grew 200%, Everytown found in its analysis of FBI data.

In Savannah, Georgia, city leaders last month passed an ordinance requiring people to secure firearms left inside cars after seeing more than 200 guns stolen from unlocked cars in a year. The measure is facing pushback from the state's attorney general.

The ATF has separately said that theft is a significant source of guns that end up in the hands of criminals. More than 1 million guns were reported stolen between 2017 and 2021, the agency found in a sweeping report on crime guns released last year. And the vast majority of gun thefts are from individuals.

The agency is prohibited by law from publicly releasing detailed information about where stolen guns end up. The information can, however, be shared with police investigating a crime. □

Associated Press

FBI warns that foreign adversaries could use AI to spread disinformation about US elections

By **ERIC TUCKER**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The FBI is concerned that foreign adversaries could deploy artificial intelligence as a means to interfere in American elections and spread disinformation, a senior official said Thursday, describing the technology as an area "that's probably going to see growth over the coming years."

The threat is more than theoretical given the prevalence of AI deepfakes and robocalls and the way such technology has already surfaced in politics.

The official noted an episode in Slovakia early this year in

which audio clips resembling the voice of the liberal party chief — purportedly capturing him talking about hiking beer prices and rigging the vote — were shared widely on social media just days before parliamentary elections. The clips were deepfakes. An incident in the U.S. involved robocalls impersonating President Joe Biden that urged voters in New Hampshire to abstain from voting in January's primary election. The robocalls were later traced to a political consultant who said he was trying to publicize the dangers of AI deepfakes.

AI technology is a challenge

to law enforcement not only because it lowers the barrier of entry for people looking to make mischief but also because it adds to the arsenal of more sophisticated foreign governments that want to interfere in elections, said the official, who was one of several FBI officials to brief reporters on the topic of election security on the condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the FBI.

The three countries of most concern to the FBI in the current election year are Russia, Iran and China. Officials in the past have ascribed different motives and ambitions to the countries in terms of



An FBI seal is seen on a wall on Aug. 10, 2022, in Omaha, Neb.
Associated Press

what they hope to achieve by influencing American elections.

In the case of Russia, intelligence officials in 2016 and 2020 have said Moscow had a clear preference for

Republican Donald Trump and took steps designed to get him elected, including a sophisticated hack-and-leak operation of Democratic emails before he was elected eight years ago. □

California to tap generative AI tools to increase services access, reduce traffic jams

By **TRAN NGUYEN**

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)

— California could soon deploy generative artificial intelligence tools to help reduce traffic jams, make roads safer and provide tax guidance, among other things, under new agreements announced Thursday as part of Gov. Gavin Newsom's efforts to harness the power of new technologies for public services.

The state is partnering with five companies to create generative AI tools using technologies developed by tech giants such as Microsoft-backed OpenAI and Google-backed Anthropic that would ultimately help the state provide better services to the public, administration officials said.

"It is a very good sign that a lot of these companies are putting their focus on using GenAI for governmental service delivery," said Amy Tong, secretary of government operations for California.

The companies will now start a six-month internal trial where the tools are tested and evaluated by state workers. The companies will be paid \$1 for their proposals. The state, which faces a significant budget deficit, can then reassess whether any tools could be fully implemented under new contracts. All the tools



California Gov. Gavin Newsom speaks in Larkspur, Calif., Tuesday, April 16, 2024.

Associated Press

are considered low risk, meaning they don't interact with confidential data or personal information, an administration spokesperson said.

Newsom, a Democrat, touts California as a global hub for AI technology, noting 35 of the world's top 50 AI companies are located in the state. He signed an executive order last year requiring the state to start exploring responsible ways to incorporate generative AI by this summer, with a goal of positioning California as an AI leader. In January, the state started asking technology companies to come up with generative AI tools for public services.

Last month, California was among one of the first states to roll out guidelines on when and how state agencies could buy such tools.

Generative AI, a branch of AI that can create new content such as text, audio and photos, has significant potential to help government agencies become more efficient but there's also an urgent need for safeguards and oversight to limit risks, state officials and experts said. In New York City, an AI-powered chatbot created by the city to help small businesses was found to dole out false guidance and advise companies to violate the law.

The rapidly growing technology has also raised concerns about job loss, misinformation, privacy and automation bias.

While state governments are struggling to regulate AI in the private sectors, many are exploring how public agencies can leverage the powerful technology for public good. California's approach, which also requires companies to disclose what large language models they use to develop AI tools, is meant to build public trust, officials said.

The state's efforts of testing the tools extensively and allowing state workers to provide feedback are some of

the best practices to limit potential risks, said Meredith Lee, chief technical advisor for UC Berkeley's College of Computing, Data Science, and Society. The challenge is how the state ensures it continues testing and learning the tools' potential risks after deployment.

"This is not something where you just work on testing for some small amount of time and that's it," Lee said. "Putting in the structures for people to be able to revisit and better understand the deployments further down the line is really crucial."

The California Department of Transportation is looking for tools that would analyze traffic data and come up with solutions to reduce highway traffic and make roads safer. The state's Department of Tax and Fee Administration, which administers more than 40 programs, wants an AI tool to help its call center cut wait times and call length. The state is also seeking technologies to provide non-English speakers information about health and social services benefits in their language and to streamline the inspection process for health care facilities.

The tool is designed to assist state workers, not replace them, said Nick Maduros, director of the Department of Tax and Fee Administration. □

Supreme Court sides with music producer in copyright case over sample in Flo Rida hit



Supreme Court is seen on Capitol Hill in Washington, Thursday, April 25, 2024.

Associated Press

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court sided with a music producer in a copyright case Thursday, allowing him to seek more than a decade's worth of damages over a sample used in a hit Flo Rida song. The 6-3 decision came in a case filed by Sherman Nealy, who was suing over music used in the 2008 song "In the Ayer," by the rapper Flo Rida. It also was featured on TV shows like "So You Think You Can Dance."

Nealy says he didn't find out his former collaborator had inked a deal with a record company that allowed the sampling of the song "Jam the Box" until 2016. He sued two years later for damages going back to the song's release. Copyright law says suits must be filed within three years of the violation, or the point when it's discovered. The record company, Warner Chappell, argued that means Nealy would only be entitled to three years' worth of royalties at

most. The question of how far back damages can go has split appeals courts, and it's one that industry groups like the Recording Industry Association of America called on the Supreme Court to decide. The opinion handed down Thursday was written by Justice Elena Kagan, and joined by her liberal colleagues Sonia Sotomayor and Ketanji Brown Jackson as well as conservative justices John Roberts, Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett. □

Netanyahu on U.S. threat to withhold arms: Israel will fight with its 'fingernails' if needed

By JOSEPH KRAUSS and
JOSEF FEDERMAN

Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Thursday that a U.S. threat to withhold some arms would not prevent Israel from continuing its offensive in Gaza, indicating it might proceed with an invasion of the packed city of Rafah against the wishes of its closest ally.

President Joe Biden has urged Israel not to go ahead with such an operation over fears it would exacerbate the humanitarian catastrophe in the Palestinian enclave. On Wednesday, he said the United States would not provide offensive weapons for a Rafah offensive, raising pressure on Netanyahu.

But in a statement released Thursday, Netanyahu said "if we have to stand alone, we will stand alone. If we need to, we will fight with our fingernails. But we have much more than fingernails." Israel's top military spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, also appeared to downplay the practical impact of any arms holdup. "The army has munitions for the missions it plans, and for the missions in Rafah, too -- we have what we need," he said in response to a question at a news conference.

Israel has repeatedly threatened to invade Rafah, where some 1.3 million Palestinians — over half the population — have sought refuge. The



A truck carries food aid for Gaza to load onto the container ship Sagamore docked at Larnaca port, Cyprus, Wednesday, May 8, 2024.

Associated Press

city in southern Gaza is also the main hub for humanitarian operations, which have been severely hindered by the closure of Gaza's two main crossings this week. Israel says Rafah is the last stronghold of Hamas and that the army must go in if it hopes to dismantle the group and return scores of hostages captured in the Oct. 7 attack that triggered the war. In an earlier response to Biden's decision, Israel's far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir wrote a post on the platform X with a heart between the words "Hamas" and "Biden." He and other ultra-nationalist members of Netanyahu's coalition

support a large-scale Rafah operation and have threatened to bring down his government if it doesn't happen. Aid groups say a Rafah invasion would be catastrophic. The U.N. says most of the territory's 2.3 million Palestinians suffer from hunger and that northern Gaza is already experiencing "full-blown famine." Even the limited operation Israel launched earlier this week, in which a tank brigade captured the Gaza side of the Rafah border crossing with Egypt, has thrown humanitarian operations into crisis. It also complicated what had been months of efforts by the U.S., Qatar and Egypt

to broker a cease-fire and the release of hostages. Hamas this week said it had accepted an Egyptian-Qatari cease-fire proposal, but Israel says the plan does not meet its "core" demands. Several days of follow-up talks appeared to end inconclusively on Thursday. Some analysts said Biden's tough line against Israel, and the rift between the allies, threatened to weaken Israel's negotiating position and harden Hamas' stances. Hamas has demanded guarantees for an end to the war and a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza as part of any deal — steps Israel has ruled out.

"It sends a discordant message at a time when Hamas is holding out on a hostage deal in the hopes that pressure will grow on Israel and it will gain a cease-fire without having to give anything in return," said the Israel Policy Forum, a pro-Israel organization based in New York. The war began with Hamas' surprise attack into southern Israel, in which it killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took another 250 hostage. The militants are still holding some 100 captives and the remains of more than 30 after most of the rest were released during a cease-fire last year.

The war has killed over 34,800 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. Israel's offensive, waged with U.S.-supplied munitions, has caused widespread devastation and forced some 80% of Gaza's population to flee their homes.

Israel's capture of the Rafah crossing Tuesday forced the closure of a key entry point for fuel, and it's unclear when it will reopen. The U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, known as UNRWA, said it only has enough stocks to maintain operations for a few days and has started rationing.

IA recently reopened route in the north is still functioning, but only 60 trucks entered on Tuesday, far below the 500 that entered Gaza each day before the war. □

Police break up another protest by pro-Palestinian activists at the University of Amsterdam

AMSTERDAM (AP) — In sometimes violent confrontations, police broke up a protest by pro-Palestinian activists at the University of Amsterdam Wednesday in a second straight day of unrest over the war in Gaza. After police ended a blockade on university grounds, hundreds of demonstrators moved to a nearby square to continue protesting late into the evening, demanding an end to the war. Some asked the

university to sever academic relations with Israel. It was unclear if and how many people were injured during the scuffles and how many protesters were detained by police. Also, at Utrecht University, some 45 kilometers (30 miles) to the south, students occupied a university building to protest Israeli actions in its war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Student protests have been gaining momentum across

Europe, following similar actions in the U.S. universities where several encampments have spread out. The war started after the Palestinian militant groups attacked the southern of Israel, killing 1,200 people in a surprise attack and taking around 250 hostage. Israel's retaliatory military operation has killed more than 34,700 Palestinians, according to local health officials, and has devastated the Gaza Strip. □



Students gather for a pro-Palestinian protest at the University of Amsterdam, Netherlands, Tuesday, May 7, 2024.

Associated Press

Transitional council in Haiti embraces new changes following turmoil as gang violence grips country

By **DÁNICA COTO**
Associated Press
PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP)

— A transitional council tasked with choosing new leaders for Haiti is changing the way it operates in a move that surprised many as gang violence consumes the country.

Instead of having a single council president, four veteran politicians will take turns leading the council every five months, according to two members who were not authorized to publicly share the changes because they had not yet been announced.

The members told The Associated Press late Wednesday that the nine-member council also will now consider five members a majority, instead of four. Seven of the council's members have voting powers.

"That's a real switch," Robert Fatton, a Haitian politics expert at the University of Virginia, said of the changes. "I think it's a good thing that they're really going to share power now. ... It is something that is very rare in Haitian politics."

The four members who will share power are original council president Edgard Leblanc Fils, ex-senator Louis Gérald Gilles, former



Edgard Leblanc Fils, left, and Smith Augustin prepare to pose for a group photo with the transitional council after it named Fils as its president in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Tuesday, April 30, 2024.

Associated Press

presidential candidate Leslie Voltaire and ex-ambassador for the Dominican Republic Smith Augustin.

The changes follow inner turmoil that threatened to derail the council after it was sworn in on April 25. The bickering began five days later, when four council members announced not only a council president but also a prime minister to the shock of many. However, it remains to be seen if former sports minister Fritz Bélizaire will re-

main as the chosen prime minister. One council member told AP that they expect to make an announcement next week.

After a prime minister is announced, the council expects to choose a new Cabinet, a process many expect will involve long and heavy negotiations with powerful politicians.

"That's going to be the other major issue," Fatton warned. The changes come as Haiti prepares for the U.N.-

backed deployment of a Kenyan police force to help fight gangs that have decimated swaths of the capital of Port-au-Prince.

Gangs launched coordinated attacks in February, burning police stations, opening fire on the main international airport that has remained closed since March 4 and storming Haiti's two biggest prisons, releasing more than 4,000 inmates. The country's largest seaport also remains paralyzed as food, medica-

tion and other critical items dwindle.

At least 1.4 million Haitians are on the verge of famine, according to the U.N.'s World Food Program.

On Thursday, Haiti's Office of Citizen Protection called on the council to prioritize human rights and provide victims of gang violence free legal assistance and timely justice.

"The country's situation...has never been so alarming," it said.

The office also demanded that the council establish a truth and justice commission to investigate human rights violations and major crimes. It urged authorities to probe the two prison attacks and provide a detailed report on all those who escaped.

"There is no peace without justice," it said.

U.S. military planes have landed in recent days with supplies including medicine and hydration fluids as well as civilian contractors to prepare for the arrival of foreign forces, although it's not clear exactly when the Kenyan police would deploy.

A team of top Kenyan security officials are in Washington D.C. this week to finalize deployment plans, including the number of police that will be sent. □



Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu speaks during a plenary session at the COP28 U.N. Climate Summit, Dec. 1, 2023, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Associated Press

By **ASHOK SHARMA**
Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — India urged pro-China Maldives on Thursday to ease tensions and improve their strained relationship. The foreign ministers of In-

dia and Maldives met in New Delhi a day ahead of a deadline set by the Maldives' new president, Mohamed Muizzu, for India to withdraw dozens of its soldiers from the archipelago nation.

India urges pro-China Maldives to ease tensions and improve their strained relationship

Tensions between India and Maldives have grown since pro-China Muizzu came to power last year.

Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaisankar told his Maldives counterpart, Moosa Zameer, that India has been a key provider of development assistance, including infrastructure projects, medical care and health facilities. "It is in our common interest that we reach an understanding on how best we can take our relationship forward," a statement by India's External Affairs Ministry quoted Jaisankar as saying.

Zameer's response was not immediately known.

Regional powers India and China are competing for influence in Maldives, which has a strategic location in the Indian Ocean.

Muizzu's election sharpened their rivalry as he took a pro-China stand and acted to remove Indian troops stationed on one of Maldives' islets.

The Press Trust of India news agency said earlier this week that India has withdrawn 51 of its soldiers in two batches from Maldives so far.

At least 75 Indian military personnel were stationed in the Maldives. They operated two aircraft donated by India and assisted in the rescue of people stranded

or faced with calamities at sea. Muizzu has taken steps to have civilians take over those activities.

On Thursday, India's External Affairs Ministry spokesman Randhir Jaiswal said both sides have been working together to ensure the continued operation of Indian aviation platforms. "Accordingly, the deputation of competent Indian technical personnel (civilians) has taken place," he said.

Muizzu ran for president on a campaign theme of "India out," accusing his predecessor of compromising national sovereignty by giving India too much influence. □



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Did you know about... Basic driving rules on Aruba (part 1)

(Oranjestad)—Have you ever felt confused when you're driving on the highways or backstreets of Aruba? Then we present a simple guide to some of the basic rules of Aruban traffic, along with some tips for things to look out for.

Speed limit

Legally, the speed limit on the four-lane highways is 80 km/h. This speed limit also counts for the main roads that are connected to the highways. The minimum speed is 50 km/h. Most people drive around 60 km/h on the main roads and about 70 km/h on the highways. There are also areas that indicate a speed limit on a sign; these are usually around populated and school areas.

The four-lane highways contain the left-lane, also known as the "fast" lane for each direction. Here is where vehicles can drive up to the maximum speed. However, legally it is not permitted to drive for long periods of time on the left lane. This lane is primarily designed for drivers to switch lanes before a roundabout, for example, if your exit on the roundabout is on your far left. The general lane to drive in—both at maximum and minimum speed—is on the right lane.

Roundabouts

Speaking of roundabouts, it is important to know where you have to en-

ter and drive on the roundabout to make your exit. A good rule of thumb is to count the exits starting from your right side. So, exit 1 would be on your right; exit 2 would be straight ahead; exit 3 would be on your far left and exit 4 would lead to the road paralleled to the one you're on, heading in the other direction.

Most roundabouts have these 4 exits, so they are relatively simple. When you're driving on the four-lane highway, it is important to know when to switch to the left lane to make your exit: if your exit is on your far left (exit 3), then you need to switch to the left lane on the highway before nearing the roundabout so you can take the path that leads you directly to your exit. If your exit is on your right or if you're going straight ahead, you can keep driving in the right lane of the highway.

It's also important to know that vehicles about to enter the roundabout must yield to those already on it. A good rule of thumb is to look out if someone is coming from your left side.

However, other roundabouts can be quite tricky to navigate...

Watty Vos Boulevard (the "paperclip" roundabout)

Probably the biggest roundabout on



the island, the "paperclip" roundabout on the Watty Vos Boulevard is one of the trickier roundabouts that could—and has—caused confused among both tourists and locals. However, once you take a good look at it, it's fairly simple. The basis is just the same as a regular roundabout (left exit? left lane! etc.), but instead of having four different exits like on a regular roundabout, now you have two extra; one on the right and the other on the left side of the roundabout. The rules don't change at all, you just have to keep an extra eye open.

Airport roundabout

Ah, yes. The infamous airport roundabout. The favorite roundabout amongst local, because of its easy (hard) lanes that never (always) cause confusion among drivers.

Sarcasm aside, this roundabout can be tricky to enter, especially when you're driving from the direction of the airport heading. When you're driving away from the airport reaching the roundabout, you'll be faced with three lanes. The far right lane is to take the exit 1 out heading east (right lane of highway). The middle exit is used for exit 1 (left lane of highway), 2 and 3. The far left exit is used to only exit on exit 3 (left lane of highway) and 4.

"Las Americas" roundabout

The Las Americas roundabout is located near the Talk of the Town hotel, west from the airport roundabout. This roundabout may look like a regular roundabout—and for the most part, it is. However, when you are driving from the east going in the direction of town, please take note that there are two exits on your right.

When you're driving towards this roundabout, you'll notice that the road becomes wider, splitting into two lanes. The right lane is used to take the first and second exit on the right. If you want to exit straight ahead, you must drive on the left lane!

It's always scary to drive in new places where the traffic may look and work differently, but once you get it right once, you'll get the hang of it in no time. Additionally, all roundabouts and roads on Aruba have signs and arrows painted on the road to help guide you. So take your time, keep your eyes open and don't forget to wear a seat belt! ☐



CREWMEMBER 2023

AWARD CEREMONY

Anniversary Awards

5 years

Jaysell Dirksz
Jehnon Geerman
Sheritza Geerman
Melinda Hassell
Lindelle Koolman
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Joselyn Maduro
Kelvin Maduro
Robert Maduro
Albert Neuman
Genan Peterson
Sylvester Rasmijn
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Melitsa Webb
Hubert Wernet
Lucia Willems



10 years

Brunildo Kruythoff
Erick Luidens
Glenda Paesch
Kenia Perez



20 years

Shirley Adamus
Brenda de Cuba
Patrick Figaroa
Oscard Pietersz



15 years

Jane Geerman
Lubeychca Trott



25 years

Edward Mansell



30 years

Claverina Tromp



Alhambra Casino celebrates its Awards Ceremony 2023

ORANJESTAD – As every year, Alhambra Casino awarded its outstanding employees for the past year with a celebration ceremony, which included awards to commemorate anniversaries, perfect attendance as well as Crew-member and Supervisor of the year.

The occasion was celebrated with a delicious lunch and live music by Nico Connor.

Annie Dirksz, marketing manager; Jan ten Have, regional director of operations; and Susan Varnes, president, gave speeches praising the commitment and incredible work by Alhambra Casino's staff during 2023, and in the end, handed out the awards for outstanding performances.

Everyone present was able to enjoy a happy occasion. Congratulations to the winners! □



Perfect Attendance

Sandra Adamus
Julio Andrade
Robert Bareno
Mozes Boekhoudt
Mayra Cole
Aldrick Croes
Gregorio de Cuba
Michaud Daal
Arthur Danies
Glenn D'Aguiar
Jaysell Dirksz
Michael Fenies
Gerald de Freitas
Edeline Geerman
Haidee Godoy
Angela Goijla
Melinda Hassell
John Henriquez
Brenda Hughes
Enid Ignacio

Urmi Inocencia
Richard Jacobs
Ashward Jones
Armando Kelly
Omar Kelly
Ronald Kelly
Javier Kock
Alexander Krozendijk
Brunildo Kruythoff
Evan Livingston
Nelson Lozano
Angelo Maduro
Carlos Maduro
Jason Maduro
Kelvin Maduro
Robert Maduro
Wilbert Maduro
Na'Chelle Maria
Edward Mansell
Maurys Odor
Fatima Paesch

Jairo Paesch
Jamie Pascal
Kenia Perez
Kim Pom
Robert Quandus
Dianira Ras
Omira Ras
Sylvester Rasmijn
Julissa Rijke
Rebecca Stennett
Claverina Tromp
Lubeychca Trott
Rudolph Vorst
Theodor Werleman
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Lucia Willems

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Episode CXXIV 124 - Island's geology

NOORD — In Aruba we can differentiate three basic geological formations. One is a hilly part, second by an undulating part and a third part consisting of limestone which embraces these two zones mentioned before and forming also the coast line.

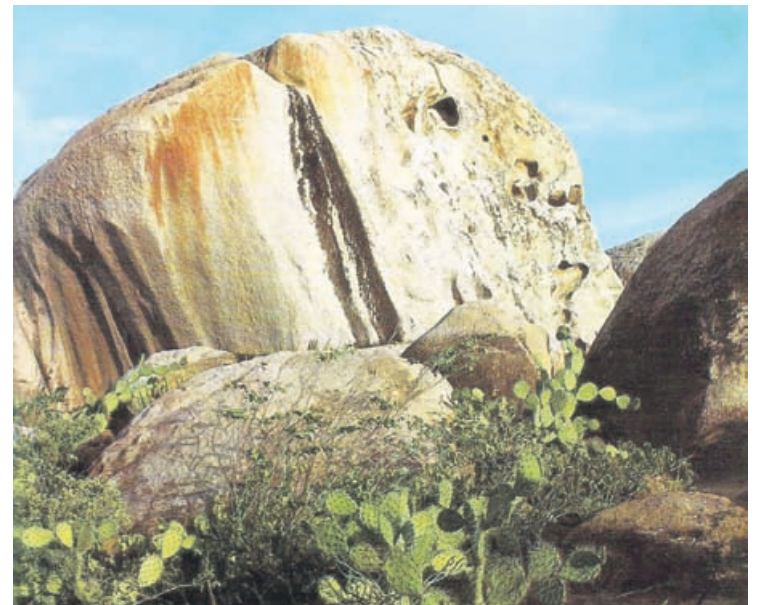
The giant boulders of Aruba are almost unique in the Caribbean. They are found at Ayo, Casibari, Santa Rosa, Paraguaná and many other places on the island. These formations have been explained as being remnants of ancient volcanic action. It has also been speculated that they once formed parts

of landslides that came down from high mountains of South America, a few miles to the south. The clusters of these huge boulders are among the interesting geological aspects of the island. However these big boulders are manly magma that has cooled off before reaching the superfi-cies.

Also known as part of the quartz diorite or granite landscape (Batholith formations) This we will find from the central part of Aruba towards the west and at the northwestern end of the island, and from the central part towards the east and south, the landscape

is dominated by a rock unit which the main component is quartzdiorite. The landscape here is flat to slightly undulating with quartz cover by boulders. This rock is light gray in color and speckled whit black and white. It is relatively hard. The typical diorite landscape is found near Santa Cruz. These are all areas with boulders and small or larger patches of sand and vegetation. Places with few boulders and large areas of quartz diorite debris are found in the east part, Tanki Flip, Noord, Alto Vista and in the south of Savaneta.

The rocks of the Aruba Lava Formation were extensively used by the inhabitants of the prehistory era. The physical characteristic of the rocks played a key role in determining the purpose for which it would be used. Diabase was used to make axes, chisels, knives and the polishers. The hardness and the homogeneous structure of the rock make it the best raw material for these artifacts available



on the island. The polishers were collected at the bay's on the northern coast and were then further polished by the Amerindians tribes who colonized our islands from out the mainland where to make similar tools and artifacts were made. Schist, a softer stone type was used to make pendants and beads; the green color was probably the determining it's attraction. No tools of schist has been found, the sheet or scaled-like structure of the stone is a limiting factor when making an axe or chisel. The rock will easily split

along the sheet-lines. Beads and pendants made out of similar rock type were found in archaeological areas_ and described in the literature as Aruba greenstone, however itis often difficult to establish what type of stone it refers to since the term greenstone covers a wide range of different green rock types (schist, rhyolite, jade).

Did you say that you love Aruba its origins and cultural heritage? Than this private encounter with our columnist anthropologist is just as you. Sessions created in a gorgeous setting for visitor with special interests. Appointment is required. Send us an email to etnianativa03@gmail.com or WhatsApp us at +297 592 2702 for a private reservation.☐



Article by: Etnia Nativa

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The district of Savaneta

A quick history guide to the island's first capital

(Oranjestad)—Before Oranjestad became the island nation's capital, Aruba's first capital was the district of Savaneta. Here is where the cultural identity of Aruba was born, and from where the rest of the island developed into what it is today.

Savaneta is said to have been the first place where the Caquetio inhabitants first stepped foot on the island. Though there isn't hard evidence to back this up, but considering the legend of the Cacique Arua, it is believed that there were already movements on Aruba—and Savaneta—around 88 AD.

The Caquetios probably made their way to the island either from Venezuela, Colombia or other Caribbean islands in the region, but with good weather it was relatively easy for them to travel back and forth in their canoes. So, since the Caquetios discovered the island, Aruba found her first form of civilization.

It wasn't until 1499 when Aruba met another group of people who set foot on the island: the Spanish explorer Alonso de Ojeda. De Ojeda first took notice of Aruba off the coast of Venezuela, during his exploration of the Latin American country. This was on August 9th, 1499. However, de Ojeda didn't actually sail to the island till 4 days later, on August 23rd, 1499. This was the beginning of the Spanish era on Aruba (1499-1636).

Alonso usually didn't stop at every island or land he saw, especially not in the Caribbean. He would often take notice of land from afar and continue sailing. However,

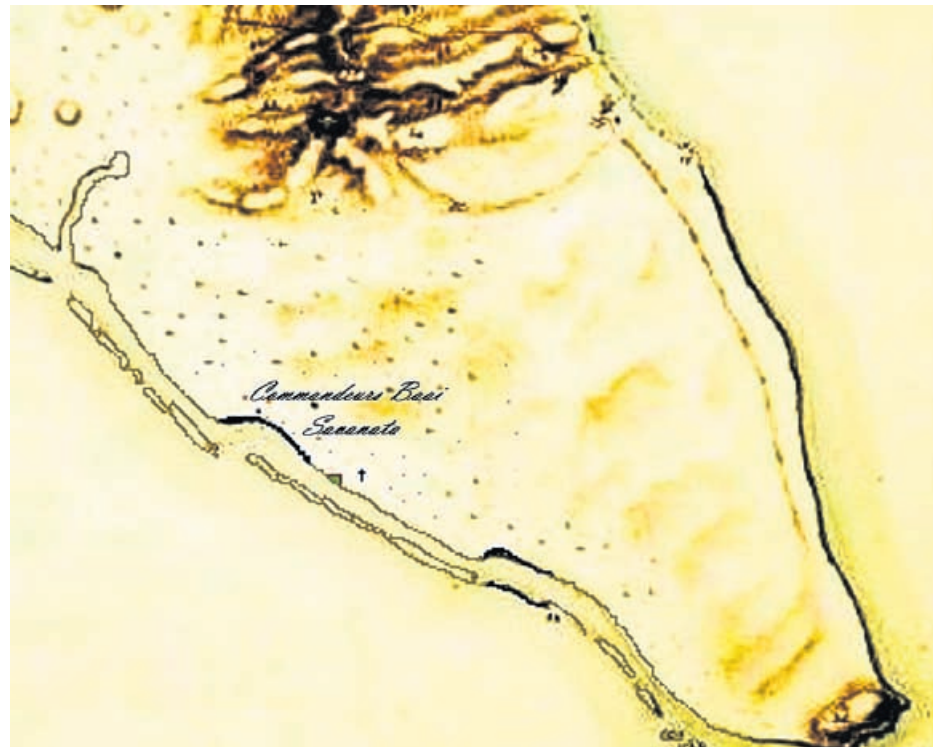
Aruba was an exception. He had heard that there were "quebracho" trees on the island, which were commonly used to produce dye or paint. But since these trees could not be found in Savaneta, he continued to search in the area of what is now known as Santa Cruz. The best way to transport the tree barks was via a route passing through Savaneta, and so the first road between Savaneta and Santa Cruz was made.

The Dutch colonial era (1636-1805)

During the 80-year war between The Netherlands and Spain, Dutch explorers and merchants began to travel to the ABC islands. Once they landed in Aruba, they deported the small Arawakan and Spanish community that was living on the island. This was the beginning of colonization of the ABC islands by the Dutch empire. Around the same, the West Indian Company (WIC) was born. Bonaire and Curaçao were mostly used for plantations, where the Dutch had transported slaves from Africa. Aruba, on the other hand, was mostly used to raise cattle and to house the haring factory. The Dutch had often forced the indigenous community to work for them.

In 1636, when the Netherlands won the war against Spain, the country surrendered the islands to the Dutch.

The Dutch administration appointed the island's first commander, an Irish man named N. Williams. Because the Dutch were interested in other Caribbean islands and countries in South America, they imported Dutch merchants and business



Commandeursbaai (Commander's Bay) at Savaneta

men, all of whom resided in Savaneta. This way, Savaneta officially became the island's first capital.

However, at the end of the 18th century, the commander at the time, J.R. Lauffer, moved his office to what is now "Horse Bay" in Oranjestad. Because the highest office on the island moved away from Savaneta, the capital lost its title to what was called then Playa.

How Savaneta got its name

The name Savaneta probably has a Spanish origin. It was said that when the Spanish climbed a hill called Yara, they saw that the area was mostly open and had no big trees. In Spanish, such a land area is called a "sabana".

Because of its land surface, Sava-

neta was a great place to construct cattle farms. From here, the farmer culture on Aruba was born. Before the Aruban Gold Rush and the construction of the Refinery in San Nicolas, most residents were farmers, and Savaneta had many inhabitants that farmed fruits and vegetables. They also continued the tradition of raising cattle, like goat, sheep, pigs and horses. Savaneta was one of the first places on the island to have a general farming culture. From this culture, many other traditions were born, like the Dera Gay Holiday that we celebrate every year on June 24th. □

Source: Historia di Savaneta (History of Savaneta) by Adolf "Dufi" Kock.



Alonso de Ojeda



"Quebracho" (Kibrahacha) tree; used to make dye and paint

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

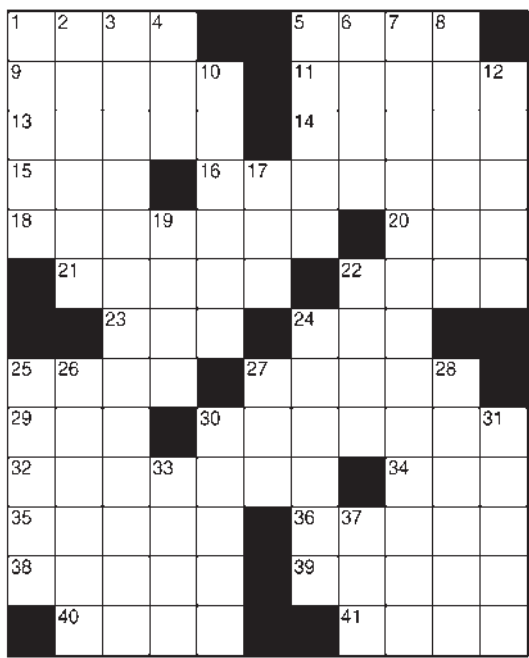
ACROSS

- 1 School subject
- 5 Job for Sherlock
- 9 Inklings
- 11 Full of energy
- 13 Nick of films
- 14 Did shoe work
- 15 Smelter supply
- 16 Stoolie's act
- 18 Backslide
- 20 Semi-circular shape
- 21 Toped
- 22 Cacao holders
- 23 Orang-utan, e.g.
- 24 Writer Jonson
- 25 Workout count
- 27 Urbane
- 29 Tough wood
- 30 Pens
- 32 Fish groups
- 34 Track trip
- 35 Skating category
- 36 Sly's "Rocky" co-star



DOWN

- 1 Un-important
- 2 Put on a pedestal
- 3 San Francisco site
- 4 Bowler, e.g.
- 5 Play groups
- 6 Heaps
- 7 Tech region
- 8 Made flat
- 10 Peaceful
- 12 Periphery
- 17 Invite
- 19 Emulates
- 22 Dessert fruit
- 24 Pops
- 25 Grating sounds
- 26 Get away
- 27 Musical note
- 28 Pal of Jerry and George
- 30 Sells for
- 31 Petty quarrels
- 33 Test type
- 37 Star pitcher



AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

5-10

CRYPTOQUOTE

CZMHZKZ HB GEJDRZMP. TBEO
USNU USZDZ HR REAZUSHBX
HBRHQZ GEJ USNU HR
XDZNUZD USNB NBG
ECRUNIMZ. — ISDH RUHNB Q.
MNDREB

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: I NEVER FEEL MORE ALONE THAN WHEN I'M TRYING TO PUT SUNSCREEN ON MY BACK. — JIMMY KIMMEL

Cruise ship Schedule: May 01 - May 28 2024

TUE	07	CARNIVAL MAGIC	09.00	22.00	C	1
TUE	14	ADVENTURE OF THE SEAS	08.00	21.00	B	1
		CARNIVAL HORIZON	08.00	22.00	C	1
WED	15	RHAPSODY OF THE SEAS	09.00	21.00	C	1
TUE	21	CELEBRITY BEYOND	08.00	21.00	B	1
		CARNIVAL VISTA	13.00	23.00	C	1
WED	22	CARNIVAL CELEBRATION	08.00	22.00	C	1
MON	27	ISLAND PRINCESS	09.00	22.00	C	1
TUE	28	CARNIVAL HORIZON	09.00	22.00	C	1

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic—but important—information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

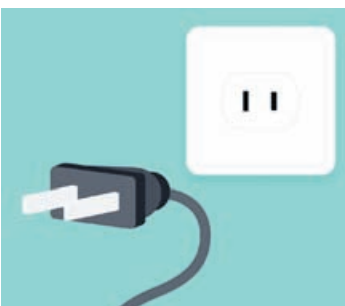
lets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.

Supermarket hours



Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

Electrical power



Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of out-

Drinking water



The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.

Safety



Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

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A scorching, rocky planet twice Earth's size has a thick atmosphere, scientists say

By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN
AP Science Writer

DALLAS (AP) — A thick atmosphere has been detected around a planet that's twice as big as Earth in a nearby solar system, researchers reported Wednesday.

The so-called super Earth — known as 55 Cancri e — is among the few rocky planets outside our solar system with a significant atmosphere, wrapped a blanket of carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide. The exact amounts are unclear. Earth's atmosphere is a blend of nitrogen, oxygen, argon and other gases.

"It's probably the firmest evidence yet that this planet has an atmosphere," said Ian Crossfield, an astronomer at the University of Kansas who studies exoplanets and was not involved with the research.

The research was published in the journal Nature. Super Earth refers to a planet's size — bigger than Earth but smaller than Neptune. The boiling temperatures on this planet — which can reach as hot as 4,200 degrees Fahrenheit (2,300 degrees Celsius) — mean that it is unlikely to host life.

Instead, scientists say the discovery is a promising sign that other such rocky

planets with thick atmospheres could exist that may be more hospitable.

The exoplanet 41 light years away is eight times heavier than Earth and circles its star Copernicus so closely that it has permanent day and night sides. A light-year is nearly 6 trillion miles (9.7 trillion kilometers). Its surface is encrusted with magma oceans.

To identify the makeup of its atmosphere, researchers studied Webb Space Telescope observations before and after the planet passed behind its star.

They separated the light emitted from the planet versus its star and used the data to calculate the planet's temperature. There's evidence the planet's heat was being distributed more evenly across its surface — a party trick atmospheres are known for. □



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In new memoir, Tom Selleck looks back at the hard years that made him a star in 'Magnum, P.I.'

By **MARK KENNEDY**

AP Entertainment Writer

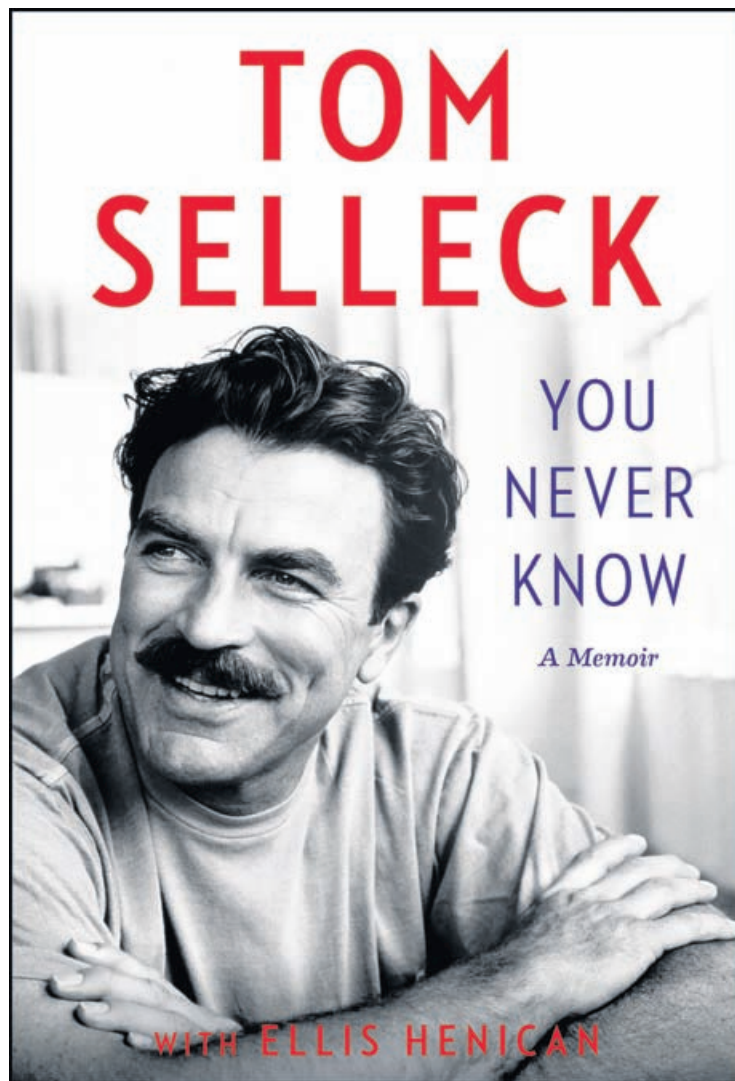
NEW YORK (AP) — Tom Selleck starts his memoir in the middle of a car crash. He is 17 and in the passenger seat when he and two friends go airborne in his mom's red Chevy Corvair, tumbling off Mulholland Drive in Los Angeles. Everyone would be eventually fine, but it's a harrowing moment and a unique way to kick off a look back.

"That's an unusual way to start," the "Magnum, P.I." and "Blue Bloods" star admits in an interview. "It seemed like the perfect way to go back a little bit and talk about my upbringing through the bad accident and the ramifications."

"You Never Know" takes readers through Selleck's years at the University of Southern California, in the Army, being bachelor No. 2 on "The Dating Game" and small roles and commercials before earning an Emmy and lasting fame as Thomas Magnum.

"I didn't have one of those headline-grabbing lives," the 79-year-old actor tells The Associated Press. "The only way I could make the book entertaining — and I think my primary job and goal in this book is to entertain — was to get into these stories in a way that the reader got inside my head."

Selleck spent four years writing the book longhand on yellow legal pads, quoting from George Will and Raymond



This cover image released by Dey Street Books shows "You Never Know" a memoir by Tom Selleck with Ellis Henican. Associated Press

Chandler along the way. He would write in the afternoon and read what he'd written to his wife at dinner.

The self-portrait that emerges is of an actor who put his head down and worked at his craft — he did six unsold pilots and his first big movie was in the unfortunate "Daughters

of Satan" — until hitting the big time in his mid-30s.

"If Selleck has one thing to sell its authenticity," says Ellis Henican, Selleck's co-writer.

"He is a guy who knows who he is. He has managed to make a very successful career in a rough business over many decades by finding a

way to be himself."

Selleck says he had no intentions of writing a tell-all or sharing salacious details of his life, though he does reveal details about his secret marriage to his second wife, Jillie Mack, who he first spotted onstage in "Cats." (Yes, he fell in love with Rumpleteazer.)

"There's plenty of stuff I have not talked, about and there's plenty of stuff that everybody else has talked about and it isn't really accurate," he says. Readers will learn that Selleck — known for his 6-foot-4 matinee-idol looks and build, sense of humor and effortless style — was often racked by insecurity and doubts, writing, "That critic on your shoulder is a formidable opponent." "I wanted to speak the language of our business to young actors," he says. "It's not an easy road. The product you're selling — when somebody says no, which is 99% of the time — is you."

Famously, his shooting schedule for "Magnum, P.I." forced him to decline an offer to play Indiana Jones in "Raiders of the Lost Ark," a part which went to Harrison Ford. A Hollywood strike actually made it possible to do both, but Selleck is at peace, writing "my only regret was that the what-if was there from time to time."

The role of Magnum — a Vietnam war veteran-turned easy-going detective who zipped around Hawaii in a red Ferrari — aired from 1980-1988.

Selleck earned an Emmy in 1984 for the episode "Home from the Sea," in which Magnum treads water alone in the Pacific Ocean until he is rescued, talking to figures in his past. "I made it, Dad. Why didn't you?," the character deliriously asks his father, who was shot down over Korea in 1951. He was thrust into hosting the Emmys on the year he won one.

"A part of me was still in host mode. I grabbed my Emmy and ran across the stage to my host podium. I put down my Emmy and looked out at the applauding audience for the first time. When I did, I gotta say, the applause grew louder and stayed that way for quite a bit longer than I expected," he writes.

Selleck bet on himself throughout his career, turning down a steady gig on "Young and the Restless" and showing up for work on the 1979 TV miniseries "The Sacketts" even though the director made a point of saying he didn't want him.

"I'm most proud that I, as a person, was willing to take risks. They didn't always pay off, but many times they did," he says. "Risk is the price you pay for opportunity itself." Portraits of other stars also make appearances, like Carol Burnett, Princess Diana and Frank Sinatra, whose last acting job was on "Magnum, P.I." and who showed off his temper as well as his acting chops while navigating a colostomy bag. □

'Lord of the Rings: The Hunt for Gollum' in development with Andy Serkis to direct and star

By **LINDSEY BAHR**

AP Film Writer

Andy Serkis is going back to Middle-earth to play Gollum in two new "Lord of the Rings" films. Warner Bros. Motion Picture Group's Michael De Luca and Pam Abdy said Thursday that Peter Jackson, Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyens, the Oscar-winning team behind the "Lord of the Rings" and "The Hobbit" trilogies, will produce and Serkis will direct. "Yesssss, Precious," Serkis said in a statement. "The time has come once more to venture

into the unknown with my dear friends, the extraordinary and incomparable guardians of Middle Earth Peter, Fran and Philippa... It's just too delicious."

The working title is "Lord of the Rings: The Hunt for Gollum" and Walsh and Boyens are co-writing the screenplay. The collaboration between Warner Bros. and New Line Cinema is expected to be released in 2026.

The "Lord of the Rings" and "The Hobbit" films have made nearly \$6 billion combined at

the box office. "The Return of the King" won a record 11 Oscars, including best director and best picture, tying "Titanic" and "Ben-Hur" for most won.

De Luca and Abdy said in a statement that this team represents their commitment to excellence in further contributing to the cinematic history of the "Lord of the Rings." Jackson, Walsh and Boyens, who consider themselves lifetime scholars of J.R.R. Tolkien's worlds, added that they were looking forward to traveling



Andy Serkis appears at the BAFTA Nominees Party in London, Saturday, Feb. 17, 2024. Associated Press

back to Middle-earth with Serkis, "who has unfinished business with that Stinker - Gollum!" □



Nelly Korda looks after her shot off the 13th tee during the first round of the LPGA Cognizant Founders Cup golf tournament, Thursday, May 9, 2024, in Clifton, N.J.

Associated Press

Nelly Korda shoots 69 to put herself in position for a record-setting 6th straight win on LPGA Tour

By TOM CANAVAN
AP Sports Writer

CLIFTON, N.J. (AP) — Nelly Korda put herself in position for a record sixth straight win on the LPGA Tour, shooting a relatively mistake-free 3-under 69 in the first round of the Cognizant Founders Cup on Thursday. The round of four birdies and a bogey on the Upper Montclair Country Club left the 25-year-old American four shots behind early leader Madelene Sagstrom, who had a 65 on a course she loves. Teeing off just before 8 a.m. EDT on the back nine with defending champion Jin Young Ko of South Korea and 2022 titlist Minjee Lee of Australia, Korda didn't do much for the first eight holes and only seemed to get going when she rolled in a 10-foot birdie on her ninth hole to get to 1 under. She had short birdies on No. 2 and No. 9, both par-5s, to finish. "There is still three more days," said Korda, who used her short game to save par a couple of times. "You still have a lot of

things that you — I know the weather is not supposed to be great and there is just different factors that go into the rest of the tournament. So it's definitely nice to get a good round in. You know, still a long, long ways away from Sunday." Korda, who fulfilled a childhood dream by walking on the red carpet at the Met Gala on Monday, was followed during her round by about 100 fans, who politely cheered her birdies on the course roughly five miles from New York. Among the group were five women wearing black T-shirts with "Everyone Watches Nelly Korda" on the front. Sagstrom, a Swede who shot an opening-round 63 and finished third two years ago, had six birdies, an eagle and a bogey playing in the first threesome off the back nine. She finished 10th here last year. "This golf course first of all suits my eye really well," Sagstrom said. "I've been playing around with the ball flight a little bit. My coach, Hans (Larsson), is in

town. This is the third year he's here, too. We love the golf course." Marina Alex, a native of nearby Wayne, New Jersey, was in a group at 68, along with Jin Hee Im of South Korea and Grace Kim of Australia. Korda was tied at 69 with a large group that included Hannah Green of Australia, who won the Los Angeles Open two weeks ago for her second victory on tour this year. There was no event last week so she is going for her second straight win. "I'm still a little bit surprised I've had two wins this year, I'll be honest," Green said. "Wilshire, obviously I really love it there. Singapore was a great putt on the last. I just want to keep putting myself in contention and having those moments of trying to win the trophy on Sunday." Lee and Ruoning Yin of China, who won the Women's PGA Championship at Baltusrol in New Jersey last year, were in a group at 2-under. Ko shot 72. □



National Treasure, bottom left, with John Velazquez, leads the pack toward the first turn during the 148th running of the Preakness Stakes horse race at Pimlico Race Course, May 20, 2023, in Baltimore.

Associated Press

Maryland governor signs bill to rebuild Pimlico, home of the Preakness Stakes

By BRIAN WITTE
Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (AP) — Maryland Gov. Wes Moore signed a measure on Thursday to rebuild Baltimore's historic but antiquated Pimlico Race Course and transfer the track to state control. Under the new law, Maryland can use \$400 million in state bonds to rebuild the home of the second jewel of horse racing's Triple Crown, the Preakness Stakes. The 149th running of the race is set for May 18. "Because of this bill, we have a path forward to continue running the Preakness in Maryland and renovate the historic Pimlico Race Course," Maryland House Speaker Adrienne Jones, a Democrat, said as Moore nodded in agreement at a ceremony. "This bill will create lasting economic benefits to the state and the Baltimore region." The plan also calls for transferring Pimlico from the Stronach Group, which is the current owner of Pimlico and nearby Laurel Park, to a newly formed nonprofit that would operate under the state. Under the plan, the Preakness would relocate to Laurel Park in 2026 while the new facility is being built, before returning to Pimlico, likely in 2027. The temporary move would come as the third Triple Crown race, the Belmont Stakes, is scheduled to return to Belmont Park from a two-year hiatus at Saratoga Race Course while the New York track undergoes a \$455 million reconstruction.

"The state of Maryland is investing in the sport of racing in similar ways that New York has already done," said Tom Rooney, president and CEO of the National Thoroughbred Racing Association, who's also a member of the Maryland Thoroughbred Racetrack Operating Authority. "I know I speak for those of us within the sport there's a lot to be excited and optimistic about as we continue through the Triple Crown season." Maryland lawmakers approved a plan in 2020 to rebuild the track, but it never got off the ground. The new plan increases the amount of state bonds to be used from \$375 million to \$400 million. The plan also calls for a training facility, with details to be determined. Aptly nicknamed Old Hilltop, the track opened in 1870. It's where Man o' War, Seabiscuit, Secretariat and many others pranced to the winner's circle. It is the nation's second oldest racetrack behind Saratoga, which debuted in 1864. But Pimlico's age has long been a concern. In 2019, the Maryland Jockey Club closed off nearly 7,000 grandstand seats, citing the "safety and security of all guests and employees." The Preakness has struggled to draw pre-pandemic attendance numbers in recent years, down to 65,000 people in 2023 for Friday and Saturday compared to more than 180,000 for the same days four years earlier. □



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Naomi Osaka is in a good place mentally. And her clay game is improving as she heads back to Paris

By **ANDREW DAMPF**
AP Sports Writer

ROME (AP) — A first career victory over a top-20 player on clay. In heavy and slow conditions. In a match that was suspended for about an hour because of rain. Naomi Osaka couldn't be happier with her progress at the Italian Open, where she beat 20th-ranked Marta Kostyuk 6-3, 6-2 on Thursday

to follow up another straight-set win a day earlier. More importantly, Osaka is in a good place mentally after returning to the tour from maternity leave that resulted in her missing all of 2023. "I don't know why, but today I just woke up very peaceful," Osaka said. "I just feel like, no matter what happens on the court, nothing will change for me off the

court. Like, my daughter will still love me. I have so many people around me. ... I think maybe that showed today. I hope that mentality stays and continues." Osaka revealed issues with depression and anxiety when she withdrew from the French Open in 2021. She later took extended breaks from the game to protect her mental health. This year's French Open starts in less than three weeks. "I'm just really excited to learn more about clay-court (tennis) and develop and go to Paris," Osaka said. "Shai (her daughter) is coming to Paris, so that's something that's keeping me very happy." Formerly ranked No. 1, Osaka won four Grand Slam titles on hard courts and has always struggled on clay. Before beating Kostyuk, Osaka was 0-8 in her career against top-20 opponents on clay. "I came out with a lot of intentions, and I think I executed

them," she said. "I'm really happy." Osaka held a break point when the rain suspension came. "I was pretty nervous coming back after the rain delay, just knowing that I really want to capitalize on that break point," she said. "Excited that I was able to do that." In her opening match, Osaka beat 45th-ranked Clara Burel 7-6 (2), 6-1 for her first victory over a top-50 player on clay since defeating Victoria Azarenka at the 2019 French Open. "Overall, if I had to give myself a rating, I'd say that I can see a lot of progress from my last match to now," she said. Osaka entered a small clay tournament in Rouen, France, last month and lost her opener to Martina Trevisan. Then she was beaten by 15th-seeded Liudmila Samsonova in her second match at the Madrid Open. After Madrid, Osaka went

to Mallorca for some full-immersion clay training. "I did a really solid block of just focusing on what I want my clay court tennis to look like," Osaka said. "I watched some videos. I watched Rafa (Nadal). I watched (Carlos) Alcaraz. I watched (Madrid champion Andrey) Rublev actually, which is very inspiring because he's smacking the ball. "I kind of thought to myself, 'I don't want to have regrets when I leave the court.' In Madrid I did kind of have regrets of not swinging fully." Osaka will next play 11th-ranked Daria Kasatkina, the highest-ranked player she's faced this year. "She has way more experience than me on clay. I feel like I'm still a baby giraffe, like I'm trying to learn my steps," Osaka said. "I'm just extremely humble. I want to learn from the match I played today and hopefully apply that." □



Japan's Naomi Osaka returns the ball to Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk at the Italian Open tennis tournament, in Rome, Thursday, May 9, 2024.

Associated Press